





821.5

P81

~~83835~~

BOOK 821.5.P81 c.1  
POPE # POPES EPISTLE ELOISA TO  
ABELARD



3 9153 00162035 2









POPE'S EPISTLE  
ELOISA TO ABELARD





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/popeseplistleloi00pope>







POPE'S EPISTLE  
ELOISA TO ABELARD

WITH  
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY  
HENRY HOWARD HARTER  
ORIGINAL EDITOR OF THE EDITION BY  
W. H. W. FISCHER

ABELARD  
THE CELEBRATED DIALECTICIAN



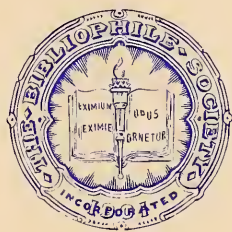
PRINTED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE  
THE BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



ABELARD  
THE CELEBRATED DIALECTICIAN

POPE'S EPISTLE  
ELOISA TO ABELARD

WITH  
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY  
HENRY HOWARD HARPER  
ORIGINAL COPPERPLATE ETCHINGS BY  
W. H. W. BICKNELL



PRINTED EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEMBERS  
THE BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY  
BOSTON MCMXXIII

821.5

P81

THE TORCH PRESS  
CEDAR RAPIDS  
IOWA



## ABELARD AND HELOISE<sup>1</sup>

The elegiac epistle of Heloïse to Abelard is one of the imperishable gems of literature which stirs the sympathetic emotions of all readers. As an exquisite painting of some favorite object or scene affords an untiring gratification to the eye, so the unrivalled beauty and pathos of Pope's immortal masterpiece is an unfailing source of entertainment to the mind. The theme of the poem is not only universal, it is eternal; it strikes a responsive chord in the heart of every human being, and will continue to do so until the end of time. The celebrated Mason declared that "it is such a *chef-d'œuvre* that nothing else of the kind can be relished after it." This classic piece occupies a unique position in the literature of all ages, and deserves a place apart from all the other works of its author.

Wordsworth classed it under the head of dramatic poetry, as a species of monodrama;

---

<sup>1</sup> We have employed the modern anglicized spelling in preference to Pope's old-fashioned *Eloisa*.



and another authority has thus commented on it: "The painter of an ideal countenance omits the subordinate details which do not contribute to the special expression he desires to convey. By isolating he intensifies it. The holy calm of Raphael's Madonnas would be marred by the introduction of all those minutiae in the living face which are not concerned in the dominant sentiment. A monodramatic poem which turns upon a single conflict of feeling possesses a kindred advantage. The one absorbing struggle has undivided sway, and there is nothing to distract attention from the pervading emotion. This unity of purpose was present to Pope's mind with absolute distinctness, and he has executed his conception with wonderful force. The conflict between Heloise's earthly inclinations and her heavenly convictions, the impetuosity with which she passes from one to the other, the tempest in her soul whichever mood prevails, deep alternately calling to deep, are depicted with concentrated energy, and continuous pathos. Her glowing thoughts are vehement without exaggeration, and the natural outbursts are untainted by spurious artifice."

As a prelude to the Epistle it seems appropriate to present a brief summary of the romantic story of the two persons it chiefly concerns, of whom one of our most distinguished American writers said: "Who really knows the true story of Abelard and Heloise? Precious few people. The names are perfectly familiar to everybody, and that is about all."

According to Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*, he was the eldest son of a soldier in Brittany. His father, who had some learning, inspired him with a passion for study, for which he showed remarkable aptitude. "He renounced the weapons of war for those of logic, resigned his paternal inheritance to his brothers, and traversed the kingdom that he might engage in scholastic tournaments at the towns on his road." About the year 1100 he arrived at Paris, where he attended the lectures of William of Champeaux, the most celebrated dialectician of the day. In the course of time Abelard founded a rival school, and the repute of all other teachers is said to have been lost in his renown. William of Champeaux was consumed with envy and struggled for years to

drive his antagonist out; but the indomitable Abelard seems to have conquered his master in all their public disputations, and finally he established himself in undisputed possession of the field.

According to Abelard's own admission he was consumed by the fever of pride and luxury. He claims to have had money and glory in great abundance, and he was obsessed with the idea that he was the only philosopher on earth. He continued in this state of mind and worldly prosperity for about eighteen years, when he met Heloise, who was barely eighteen, while he was nearly forty. His unequalled fitness for amorous intrigue and his conquest of Heloise are related by him with the same vainglorious assurance with which he boasts of his supremacy in the schools. "My name," he says, "was then so great, the graces of youth and the perfection of form gave me a superiority so unquestionable, that from whatever female I might have honored with my love I should have feared no repulse."

The gifted young Heloise attracted Abelard's notice, and he deliberately formed a plan to seduce her. She resided with her

uncle Fulbert, a canon of the cathedral at Paris, whose interest in life was centered on money and his talented niece. The rigid superintendence to which French maidens were subjected made it manifestly impossible for Abelard to accomplish his designs from outside, so under the pretense of a desire to be released from household cares, he offered to board and lodge with the canon at whatever price he chose to ask, and to take charge of the instruction of Heloise. Fulbert fell an easy victim to this Machiavelian plot; he set his price, the bargain was quickly consummated, and Abelard was installed as a member of the household. The unsuspecting guardian confided — to use the language of Abelard — the tender lamb to the ravenous wolf, and authorized the tutor to administer corporal punishment if his pupil neglected her studies. In his astounding comments on the insidious affair Abelard professes surprise at the credulity of Fulbert in entrusting him with an authority which would enable him to subdue Heloise by blows if she resisted his advances. He thinks Fulbert childishly simple-minded for not suspecting “the grand luminary of phi-



losophy and divinity" was a wretch of fiendish depravity — a demon who would adopt the brutal expedient of beating an innocent girl into submission to his wicked designs. He says that in order to keep off suspicion "blows were given, but in love, and not in rage, in tenderness, and not in anger."

During the frenzy of his passion Abelard neglected his school and became indifferent to public applause; his lectures became irksome to him, and he gave himself up to the composition of amatory songs, which he says were widely sung. His apathetic lectures and preoccupied air soon betrayed his infatuation to his disciples; they divined the truth, the *liaison* became noised abroad, and the knowledge of it at last got round to Fulbert, who on discovering that he had been duped, ousted Abelard from his home. Matters were worse confounded when Abelard entered Fulbert's house one night during his absence, abducted Heloise, and in the guise of a nun carried her off to Brittany.

The outraged canon was nearly mad between grief and indignation; but a truce was eventually arranged and ostensibly to appease Fulbert, Abelard married Heloise, af-

ter which she returned to her uncle's home. The ceremony was performed in secret, on the understanding that the nuptials should not be made public, lest the disclosure might endanger Abelard's position as a canon in the church, and his reputation as a philosopher. But in view of the fact that during her absence in Brittany Heloise had become a mother, her relatives broke their promise and proclaimed that she was married, in order to quiet the opprobrious gossip. In deference to her husband's interests Heloise joined him in protesting that the report of their marriage was false — which not only renewed the activities of the scandal mongers, but discredited Fulbert and made him an object of public ridicule.

To add to Fulbert's misfortunes Abelard again stole into his house by night, took Heloise out and removed her to the abbey of Argenteuil, near Paris, under the pretext of safeguarding her from persecution; but her friends surmised that his real motive was to get rid of her, and in revenge for his former treachery and his subsequent cold-bloodedness, Fulbert, goaded to distraction by the confusion and disgrace brought upon his

household, hired some miscreants (four, it is said) who, according to historic account, entered Abelard's apartment at night and "inflicted upon him a terrible and nameless mutilation." Next morning the community was all agog over the shocking news, which soon reached Heloise at Argenteuil.

Overwhelmed with mortification, Abelard resolved to hide himself in a monastery, and selected St. Denis. His selfish nature would not suffer him to leave Heloise free, and before he bound himself by an irrevocable vow he exercised the authority he had acquired by marrying her, and compelled her to take the veil at the abbey of Argenteuil. In order to forestall any thought of non-compliance with his command he saw to it that all the formalities of her enforced retirement were diligently complied with before taking the vow himself.

Abelard's monastic life was not one of calm repose. His supercilious and controversial nature was in nowise changed by his retirement. At St. Denis he provoked the hostility of his fellow-monks, and to get rid of him they joined in the entreaties of his adherents that he leave them and resume his



lectures, which in due time he did. But his enemies having increased both in activity and in numbers, he decided to withdraw to an uninhabited district on the banks of the river Ardusson, where he constructed a crude oratory of sticks and mud. "His admirers followed him into his desolate retreat. Sleeping in rude huts, and subsisting on bread and herbs, they abjured the physical luxuries of existence for the mental feast of listening to the arid speculations then in vogue. His auditors replaced his oratory by a larger building of wood and stone, which served for a lecture-room, and he named it the Paraclete, or the Comforter, because Providence had sent him consolation to the spot whither he had fled in despair. His body, he says, was concealed by his seclusion, but he filled the universe by his word and his renown. His enemies were enraged, and groaned inwardly, 'Behold the world is gone after him, and our persecution has increased his glory.' The celebrated St. Bernard entered the lists against him, and Abelard began to be deserted by his adherents." At length he lost heart and abandoned the Paraclete.

When the monks of St. Gildas — a remote abbey on the coast of Brittany — selected him as their head, he was glad to embrace a banishment which removed him from the midst of his increasing foes. But new enmities and a worse fate awaited him. As at St. Denis, he soon made himself obnoxious to his brethren by his fault-finding and arrogant behavior. The occupants of St. Gildas are said to have been an “irregular, disorderly, ferocious tribe of monks and savages, whose vindictive rage knew no bounds;” and their actions, if correctly reported, certainly justify this egregious imputation. “They poisoned Abelard’s food, but he forbore to taste it. They poisoned the chalice at the altar, but he did not drink of it. They suborned a servant to poison his victuals when he was on a visit to his brother, and again he happened not to eat of the dish, while a monk who partook of it died on the spot. Wherever he went they posted hired assassins on the road, but for some untold reason he always escaped.”

It was while laboring under the stress of these harrowing circumstances that Abelard wrote his *Historia Calamitatum*, in the form

of a long autobiographical letter to a friend in misfortune, with the avowed purpose of consoling him with a recital of his own greater woes. Had he confined his narrative to his own individual affairs, all would have been well; but in the letter he unblushingly laid bare all the details of his illicit relations with Heloise, not even withholding her name. And his shamelessness is the more aggravated by his admission that the letter was intended for the public no less than for his friend. Heloise had been living quietly and had neither uttered a word of complaint nor otherwise molested him since she entered the convent. He had done nothing to comfort her and she had done nothing to provoke him. If it seems strange that without any provocation he opened up these delicate matters and by thus offering them for public review, exposed the self-sacrificing Heloise to new obloquy after her twelve years of seclusion and tearful regrets, it is even more strange that he could have been capable of adding groundless accusation and personal insult to that injury, as he did in his replies to her pensive, heartrending account of her forlorn condition.

It is conceivable that Abelard may have tired of the yielding, confiding victim of his “manly charms,” and that he could no longer whole-heartedly respond to her amorous overtures; but it is a generally accepted maxim, that no one save the most abandoned profligate could be guilty of such brazen effrontery as to gloat over the act of despoiling an innocent girl who had trusted him, and given herself to him, body and soul; and for this reason, while the authenticity of the letter has usually been taken for granted, some authorities have believed it to be a forgery. But as against that charitable deduction we have the established fact that Heloise saw the letter, read it, and answered it; and it is not at all probable that she could have been persuaded that such a monstrous, perfidious violation of confidence could have issued from the pen of her husband had it not been in his own handwriting, which was of course familiar to her. In fact she wrote him — “The superscription in a moment told me from whom it came.” In some unexplained manner the letter reached Heloise in her convent retreat, and although she might be expected to be filled with rage and

humiliation, the sight of her old lover's handwriting, coupled with the highly colored account of his discomfiture, seems to have stirred up and rekindled the smouldering fires that she had long kept in subjection, and they burst forth in a flame of passion which she could no longer restrain. It was a case where love and sympathy gained a complete mastery over resentment. She wrote Abelard a glowing response in which she reavowed her unaltering loyalty and devotion, and in language perhaps more human than discreet, she reviewed the scenes of their former days and the agonizing torments of her lonely, hopeless situation. This letter was followed by two others, the substance of all of which is embodied in Pope's Epistle. The character of Heloise comes out clearly in her open-hearted letters, and history records no more illustrious example of a woman's constancy, and of her innate tendency to forgive wrongs inflicted by the man she loves. While in some of his descriptive matter Pope had recourse to more or less poetic license, he has for the most part adhered pretty closely to the text of Heloise's letters as translated by Hughes in 1714.



At the date of her letters Heloise had long been leading a cloistered life, which she embraced against her will, at the command of her husband. During those years, through which she suffered in silence, she had won the love and respect of her companions and superiors, and had been made abbess of her convent. She had almost become reconciled to her isolation, when all at once the slow-healing wounds of her heart were torn open by the sight of Abelard's calamitous letter to his friend, and all the cumulative griefs of past years were lived over again. "By that melancholy relation to your friend you have awakened all my sorrows," she wrote. Her human qualities had not been subdued by misfortune, time or religion, and the picture she so vividly portrays shows that although long immured from the world she was still keenly sensible of its pleasures and its disappointments. In one of her letters she exclaims: "O vows! O convent! I have not lost my humanity under your inexorable discipline. You have not made me marble by changing my habit!"

A few censorious critics, shocked at an unaffected expression of genuine human

emotions, and blinded by a refined quality of moral supersensitiveness, have assailed Heloise for the looseness of her character and the frankness of her letters, forgetting that their unreservedness and sincerity are the very attributes that vivified them and made their author both famous and beloved. Some of these detractors whose fertile imaginations outstripped their sober critical faculties have ventured to suggest emendatory measures such as Heloise should have employed in rebuking her refractory lover, by which means she would, it is claimed, have exhibited a stanch, implacable nature, instead of wantonly exposing herself to the reproof of virtuous-minded people. However, had she adopted the alternative recommended by those who have condemned her she would now be about as little known as they are.

But Heloise has always been vigorously defended by the champions of historic romance, and the trusting, unhappy woman, seduced and abandoned to a cloistered life by Abelard, has for centuries been held up as a paragon of feminine superiority. "This noble creature," says M. Cousin, "loved as



Saint Theresa, and sometimes wrote as Seneca.” “Her contemporaries,” says M. Rémusat, “placed her above all women, and I do not know that posterity has belied her contemporaries.” “France,” says M. Henri Martin, “has always felt the grandeur of Heloise, and the just instinct of the public has numbered the mistress of Abelard among our national glories.”

For some reason the names of Abelard and Heloise are linked together in the popular mind, as a signal example of the most remarkable and the most unfortunate *pair* of lovers ever known. “They retired each to a several convent,” where they are commonly supposed to have pined for each other, and in their unconventional love letters to have immortalized their names and their mutual affections. But nothing could be farther from the truth, if the letters ascribed to them are genuine; for there is not a passage in any of his letters to her, or to anyone else, upon which to base the assumption that his regard for her was anything more than a transitory physical passion, at the expiration of which he sought to rid himself of her. It was a self-centered passion, on his side, in which

neither friendship nor spiritual love had any part.

It has been contended in Abelard's defence that he required Heloise to enter a convent because he loved her, and could not bear the thought of "entering the fold" and leaving her outside to endure the trying vicissitudes of the "cruel, sinful world." But Heloise was no fickle-minded plebeian beauty whose physical charms were her only asset, and there was no danger of her becoming the prey of other Abelards. She was of noble extraction, highly educated, and is reputed to have been one of the most brilliant women of her time. She was young, she was attractive, she loved life, she had relatives with ample means who still loved her, and she would have fared no worse as a free citizen than she had fared before she met Abelard. Moreover, her child needed her love and her protection, and she shrank with horror from the seclusion of convent life. People of sound mind and body who are confined in institutions are not placed there by loved ones with a view to promoting their happiness or protecting them from the rigors of the world. And ordinarily, a man

— even the most heartless — who has grown weary of a woman's caresses is content with merely discarding her and allowing her to seek what consolation and happiness she may, without locking her up in a place and manner involving no expense to himself, and then mocking her misery with epistolary abuse, and calling her the "Spouse of Christ," as Abelard did with Heloise.

Abelard was old enough to be Heloise's father; her promising life had scarcely begun, while his was past its meridian. She had had a child by him, which was legitimized by their marriage. He unfeelingly compelled her to abandon her child, to turn her back upon life and liberty and every earthly thing that was dear to her, including himself. Why? Not because he loved her, but because — having been punished, and his proud spirit being temporarily crushed — he decided to retire into seclusion, and could not endure the thought that she might enjoy a little worldly happiness in which he had no part. He was not moved by any apprehension that she might be ill-treated and sorrowful; what he feared was that she might be well-treated and light-hearted. "If we had

not been married," he says, "my retreat from the world, or the counsel of your relatives, or the attraction of pleasure, would have retained you in the world. . . Do you wish to participate in my joy only, and not in my grief? Do you wish to rejoice with the rejoicing and not weep with the weeping?" At the time of writing this he was at liberty to go and come as he pleased; for he had returned to the outside world, where he spent many of the happiest days of his life lecturing, arguing, writing and disseminating his doctrines. All this time the young, warm-blooded Heloise was languishing within the "relentless walls," against her will, but obedient to his command. If she ever had any season of "rejoicing" after falling into Abelard's snare, history has loudly ignored it. Listen to what she says in her first letter to him — written prior to the receipt of the one from which the foregoing is extracted:

"Oh! if I may say it, Heaven has been cruel to me beyond all conception. O inclement clemency! O unfortunate fortune! she has so far consumed her weapons against me, that she has none left for others against

whom she rages! Against me she exhausted her full quiver, so that others in vain fear her resentment. Neither would she find a place in me for another wound, if she had a single arrow left. Among so many wounds she fears to inflict one more, lest my punishments be ended with death. And although she does not cease to work at my destruction, yet she fears the death which she hastens. . .

“Tell me one thing, if you are able — why, since our entrance upon a religious life, which you resolved upon without consulting me, you have so neglected me, so forgotten me, that you have never come to encourage me with your words, nor in your absence have consoled me with a letter.”

It is not quite clear how the adherents of Abelard reconcile this last paragraph with the contention that he was a constant and devoted lover. Some commentators may have reckoned time as being of little consequence in those ancient days, but a husband who after depriving his wife of her liberty neglected her for twelve years could hardly sustain the reputation of being a “loving, tenderhearted spouse.”

We can excuse a crazy man for doing



crazy things, and a religious fanatic usually possesses at least the virtue of sincerity; but we could not condone the act of a sound-minded man of mature years and worldly knowledge who designedly sets out to arouse the love of a talented young girl, then after seducing her, marries her secretly, and having thus prudently invested himself with the necessary authority of the time, robs her of her child, and shuts her up within convent walls, there to fade, forget and die, like a sun-loving flower transplanted in a dark cave. Little wonder that the perpetrator of this inhuman villainy was in his latter days convicted of heresy by an assembly of competent judges, and sentenced by the pope to perpetual silence. Abelard professed to be a servant of God, a teacher of religion, an expositor of the philosophy of life; but the sort of religion and philosophy that he practised on Heloise is hardly compatible with the doctrines upon which true Christianity is founded. Indeed his treatment of his wife and child provokes a suspicion that the teachings of False Prophets were not confined exclusively to Biblical times.

To the impassioned declaration of He-

loise's unwavering love, and the heartrending account of her terrific mental suffering, in which she pleaded for but one kind word to assuage her misery, he responded coldly with words of reproof and incrimination, with a prolixity of rhetorical utterances and pedantic quotations, having no sympathetic bearing whatever upon the subject in hand. As an instance of his base unfairness, in one of his letters he charged her with hypocrisy and profanation of sacred rites in having run away from her uncle's house in the garb of a nun — when it was he himself that procured the garment, brought it to her and commanded her to wear it when he abducted her in the night. And to this gross insult he added: “With what propriety then has the divine justice compelled you to embrace a state which you could so wantonly ridicule, willing that in the very habit of a nun you should expiate the crime committed against it!”

Let it not be supposed that this is the lowest depth of depravity to which the human mind can descend, for in addition to accusing her of these and other false pretences, he boldly charged her with being his enemy, and



the cause of all his woes. "I have, as you say, suffered for you; but I have rather suffered by you!" he said. He commanded her to keep quiet and not molest him with her lamentations. "Let me hear no more of such complaints," he wrote, "quit these baneful thoughts, that you may torment me no longer." He reminded her repeatedly that her sufferings were God's just punishment for her sins; but he did not neglect to implore her to pray earnestly for him, that he might triumph over his enemies and the dangers that beset him; and he went so far as to compose a prayer which he besought her to repeat ardently and often, with arms uplited to Heaven.

Once the great lover — so reputed — expressed this cheering hope in answer to a touching entreaty for some consoling message to revive her drooping spirits: "I hope you will be contented when you have finished this mortal life, to be buried near me." The following is about the only request of Heloise that he readily complied with: "I conjure you for pity's sake to help a poor wretch to renounce her desires, herself, and if possible, even to renounce you!"

Abelard's oratorical powers were so great that his concourse of listeners is said to have numbered upwards of five thousand at a time; but whatever measure of fame may be attributed to him as a philosopher who astounded and entranced his audiences with his magnetism and the convincing power of his logic, he owns still another distinction — that of having been the possessor of a heart so cold and callous as to resist and ignore one of the most beautiful, the most pathetic, the most insistent and the most irresistible appeals ever recorded in literature. It is no wonder that his renown as a philosopher has for ages been totally obscured by his fame as the lover of Heloise — or more properly speaking, as the man whom Heloise loved. As her tender regard for him in life was un-failing, so in death her glory shelters his name and affords its sole protection from oblivion.

But after all, whatever his virtues were, let them live; and as for his faults — out of respect for the memory of Heloise, we may as well allow them to fade from our memory. It would not be too charitable to conclude that early in life he became a slave to an in-

ordinate craving for glory, which in later years was succeeded by a species of religious fanaticism and other misfortunes that totally disqualified him for the offices of either husband or lover. Egotistical and selfish to the last degree, he was not only the victim of an insatiable ambition, but along with it he had a restless and splenetic nature in which there seems to have been no element of compassion. No matter what the motives were that prompted him, we may at least credit him with having inspired a love which has seldom been equalled, and never surpassed; a love moreover, which has furnished a fertile theme for poets, romancers and commentators for the past eight hundred years.

Abelard and Heloise were interred in the monastery of the Paraclete. He died about the year 1142, and she some twenty-one years later. They were originally buried in the same crypt, and in 1630, or near five hundred years after the death of Heloise, their remains were consigned to the same grave. Then their bones are reported to have been taken up and put into a double coffin, divided by a partition of lead. They afterwards underwent various disinterments and re-

movals, till in 1817, with great pomp and ceremony the remains were transferred to the cemetery of Père la Chaise at Paris, where they seem to have found a permanent resting place.

After visiting the tomb of Abelard and Heloise Mark Twain wrote the following comment upon it: "Among the thousands and thousands of tombs in Père la Chaise, there is one that no man, no woman, no youth of either sex, ever passes by without stopping to examine. Every visitor has a sort of indistinct idea of the history of its dead, and comprehends that homage is due there, but not one in twenty thousand clearly remembers the story of that tomb and its romantic occupants. This is the grave of Abelard and Heloise — a grave which has been more revered, more widely known, more written and sung about and wept over than any other in Christendom, save only that of the Saviour."

HENRY H. HARPER

POPE'S EPISTLE, ELOISA TO  
ABELARD





## POPE'S EPISTLE, ELOISA TO ABELARD

Nothing of the kind has ever been produced equal to it for pathos, painting and melody. The mellifluence and the solemn cadence of the verse, the dramatic transitions, the judicious contrasts, the language of genuine passion, uttered in the sweetest flow of music, and the pervading solemnity and grandeur of the picturesque scenery, give the Epistle a wonderful charm. It may be said of it with truth:—

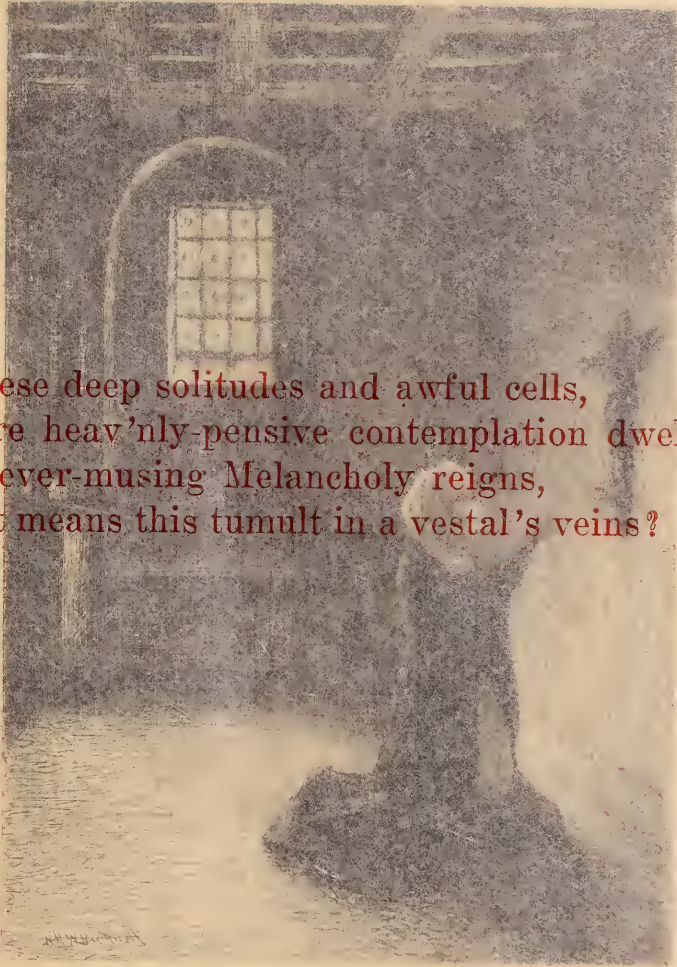
It lives, it breathes, it speaks what love inspires,  
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires.

Nothing in any language could be more beautiful and charitable than Heloise's closing benediction addressed to the man who robbed her of her chastity, her child, her liberty and every possibility of happiness, then mocked her lonely misery with abuse:—

In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drowned,  
Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round;  
From opening skies may streaming glories shine,  
And saints embrace thee with a love like mine!



In these deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,  
And ever-musing Melancholy reigns,  
What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?



What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?  
And ever-musing Melancholy reigns,  
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,  
In these deep solitudes and awful cells,







## ELOISA TO ABELARD

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,  
And ever-musing melancholy reigns,  
What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?  
Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?  
Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?  
Yet, yet I love! — From Abelard it came,  
And Eloisa yet must kiss the name.

Dear fatal name! rest ever unrevealed,  
Nor pass these lips, in holy silence sealed:  
Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,  
Where, mixed with God's, his lov'd idea lies;  
O write it not, my hand — the name appears  
Already written — wash it out, my tears!  
In vain lost Eloisa weeps and prays,  
Her heart still dictates, and her hand obeys.

Relentless walls! whose darksome round  
contains  
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains;  
Ye rugged rocks, which holy knees have worn,  
Ye grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid  
thorn!

Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins  
keep,  
And pitying saints, whose statues learn to  
weep!

Tho' cold like you, unmov'd and silent grown,  
I have not yet forgot myself to stone.  
All is not Heaven's while Abelard has part,  
Still rebel Nature holds out half my heart;  
Nor prayers nor fasts its stubborn pulse re-  
strain,  
Nor tears, for ages taught to flow in vain.

Soon as thy letters trembling I uncloze,  
That well-known name awakens all my woes.  
Oh name for ever sad! for ever dear!  
Still breathed in sighs, still ushered with a tear.  
I tremble, too, where'er my own I find,  
Some dire misfortune follows close behind,  
Line after line my gushing eyes o'erflow,  
Led thro' a sad variety of woe:  
Now warm in love, now withering in my bloom,  
Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!  
There stern religion quenched th' unwilling  
flame,

There died the best of passions, Love and Fame.

Yet write, O write me all, that I may join  
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.  
Nor foes nor fortune take this power away;  
And is my Abelard less kind than they?

Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare;  
Love but demands what else were shed in  
prayer;

No happier task these faded eyes pursue;  
To read and weep is all they now can do.

Then share thy pain, allow that sad relief;  
Ah, more than share it, give me all thy grief.  
Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's  
aid,

Some banished lover, or some captive maid;  
They live, they speak, they breathe what love  
inspires,

Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires;  
The virgin's wish, without her fears, impart,  
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart;  
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,  
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.

Thou knowest how guiltless first I met thy  
flame,  
When Love approached me under Friendship's  
name;

My fancy formed thee of angelic kind,  
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous mind.  
Those smiling eyes, attemp'ring every ray,  
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day.  
Guiltless I gazed; Heav'n listened while you  
sung;

And truths divine came mended from that  
tongue.



From lips like those what precept failed to  
move?

Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love:  
Back thro' the paths of pleasing sense I ran,  
Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.  
Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,  
Nor envy them that Heav'n I lose for thee.

How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I  
said,

Curse on all laws but those which love has  
made!

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,  
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.<sup>1</sup>  
Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dame,  
August her deed, and sacred be her fame;  
Before true passion all those views remove;  
Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to  
Love!

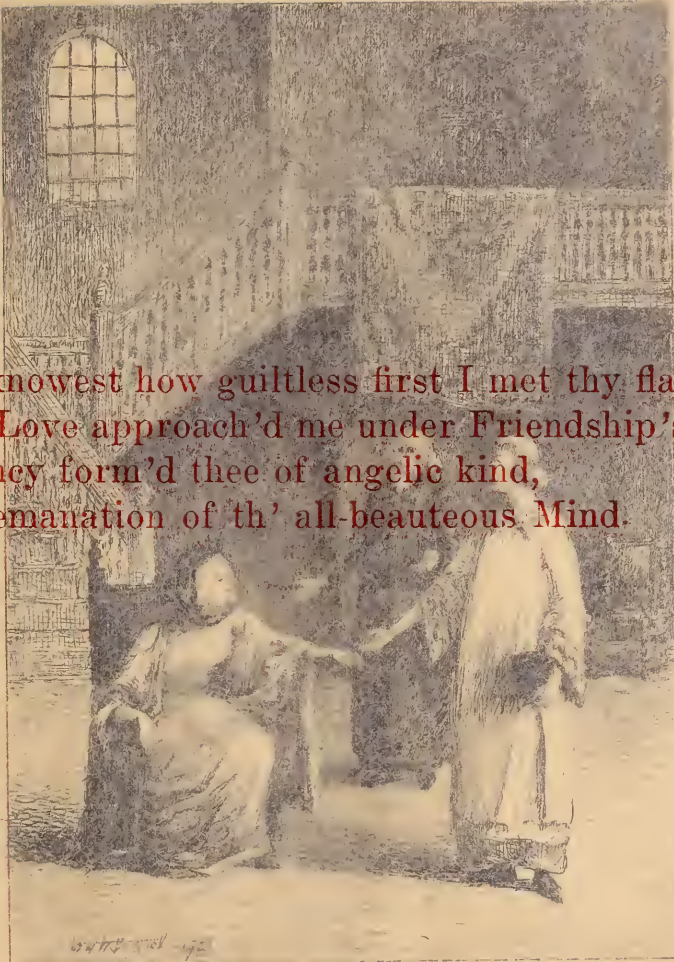
The jealous God, when we profane his fires,  
Those restless passions in revenge inspires,  
And bids them make mistaken mortals groan,  
Who seek in love for aught but love alone.  
Should at my feet the world's great master<sup>2</sup>  
fall,

---

<sup>1</sup> This was merely Heloise's experience, and was not avowed as a general maxim.

<sup>2</sup> She refers to Augustus. — "I call God to witness that if Augustus, the supreme master of the world, had offered me the royal honor of his alliance I should have accepted with more

Thou knowest how guiltless first I met thy flame,  
When Love approach'd me under Friendship's name;  
My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,  
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous Mind.



From lips like those what precept failed to  
move?

Too soon they taught me 'twas no sin to love:

Back thro' the paths of pleasing sense I ran,

Nor wished an angel whom I loved a man.

Dim and remote the joys of saints I see,

Nor envy them that Heav'n I lose for thee.

How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I  
said,

Curse on all laws but those which love has  
made!

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,

Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.<sup>1</sup>

Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dame,

And let me, and sacred be her name;

Before true passion all those views remove;

Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to  
Love!

The jealous God, when we profane his fires,

These restless passions in revenge inspires,

And bids them make mistaken mortals groan,

Who seek in love for aught but love alone.

Should at my feet the world's great master<sup>2</sup>

fall,

<sup>1</sup> This was merely Heloise's experience, and was not avowed  
as a general maxim.

<sup>2</sup> He refers to Augustus. — "I call God to witness that if  
Augustus, the supreme master of the world, had offered me the  
royal honor of his alliance I should have accepted with more





Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world fare-  
well?<sup>1</sup>

As with cold lips I kissed the sacred veil,  
The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew  
pale:

Heav'n scarce believed the conquest it surveyed,  
And saints with wonder heard the vows I made.  
Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,  
Not on the cross my eyes were fixed, but you!  
Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,  
And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.  
Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my  
woe:

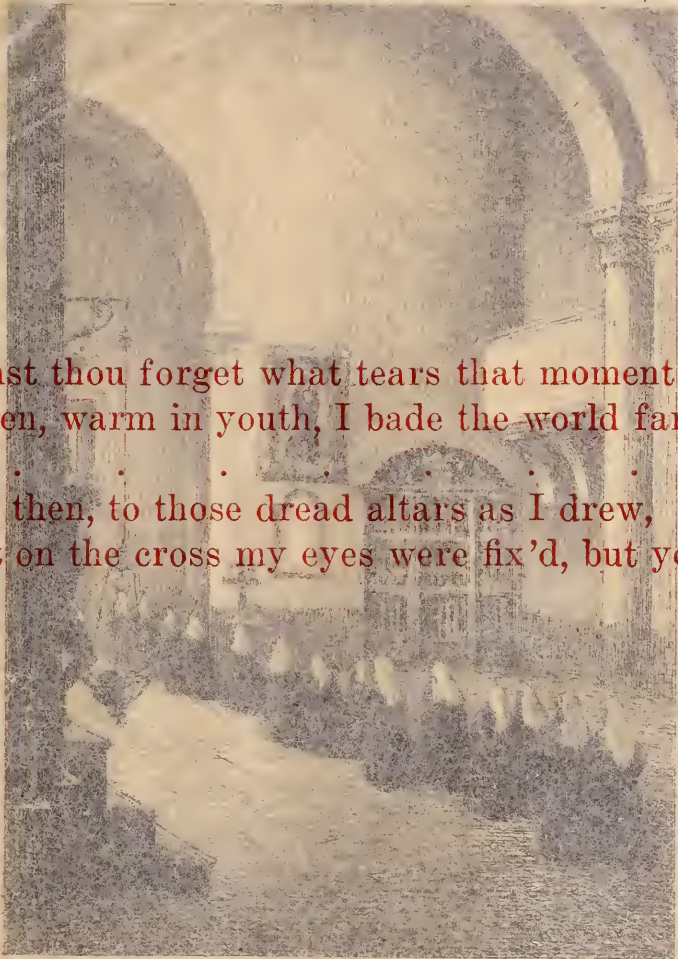
Those still at least are left thee to bestow.  
Still on that breast enamoured let me lie,  
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye;  
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be pressed;  
Give all thou canst — and let me dream the rest.  
Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,  
With other beauties charm my partial eyes;  
Full in my view set all the bright abode,  
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.

---

<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar sentiment was expressed by Burns in the second stanza of his famous love poem, "To Mary in Heaven:"

That sacred hour can I forget,  
Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
Where by the winding Ayr we met  
To live one day of parting love?





Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world farewell?

Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,  
Not on the cross my eyes were fix'd, but you.

Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world fare-  
well?<sup>1</sup>

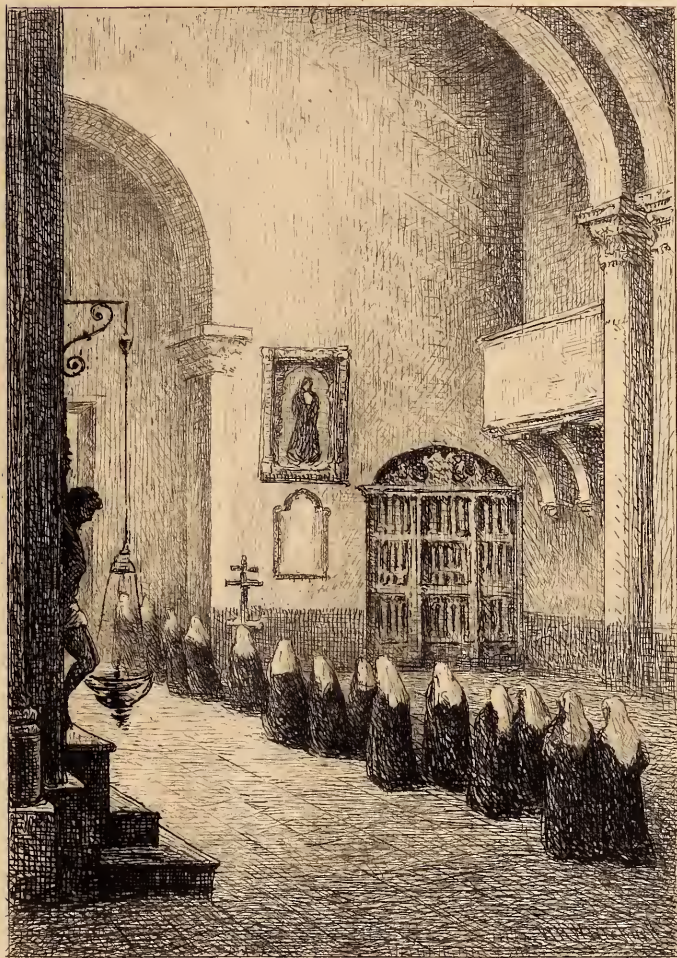
As with cold lips I kissed the sacred veil,  
The shrines all trembled, and the lamps grew  
pale:

Heav'n scarce believed the conquest surveyed,  
And saints with wonder heard the vows I made.  
Yet then, to these dread altars as I drew,  
Not on the cross my eyes were fixed, but you!  
Not grace, or zeal, love only was my call,  
And if I lose thy love, I lose my all.

~~Canst thou forget what tears that moment fell,  
When, warm in youth, I bade the world fare-  
well?  
Those still at least are left thee to bestow.  
Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,  
Not on the cross my eyes were fixed, but you!  
Point on thy lip, and to thy heart be pressed;  
Give all thou canst — and let me dream the rest.  
Ah no! instruct me other joys to prize,  
With other beauties charm my partial eyes;  
Full in my view set all the bright abode,  
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.~~

<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar sentiment was expressed by Burns in the second stanza of his famous love poem, "To Mary in Heaven:"

That sacred hour e'en I forget,  
O'er I forget the hallowed grove,  
Where by the winding Ayr we met  
To part one day of parting love!







Ah think, at least thy flock deserves thy care!  
Plants of thy hand, and children of thy prayer;  
From the false world in early youth they fled,  
By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led.  
You raised these hallowed walls; the desert  
smiled,

And Paradise was opened in the wild.<sup>1</sup>  
No weeping orphan saw his father's stores  
Our shrines irradiate or emblaze the floors;  
No silver saints, by dying misers given,  
Here bribed the rage of ill-requited Heaven;  
But such plain roofs as piety could raise,  
And only vocal with the Maker's praise.  
In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound),  
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets  
crowned,

Where awful arches make a noonday night,  
And the dim windows shed a solemn light,  
Thy eyes diffused a reconciling ray,  
And gleams of glory brightened all the day.  
But now no face divine contentment wears,  
'Tis all blank sadness, or continual tears.  
See how the force of others' prayers I try,  
(O pious fraud of am'rous charity!)

---

<sup>1</sup> The Paraclete was founded by Abelard after he left St. Denis, but after a time he abandoned the place, and when the nuns were ejected from the abbey of Argenteuil, Heloise was removed to the Paraclete, where she became abbess in 1136. It was from there that she wrote her famous letters.



But why should I on others' prayers depend?  
Come thou, my father, brother, husband, friend!  
Ah, let thy handmaid, sister, daughter, move,  
And all those tender names in one, thy love!  
The darksome pines, that o'er yon rocks reclined,

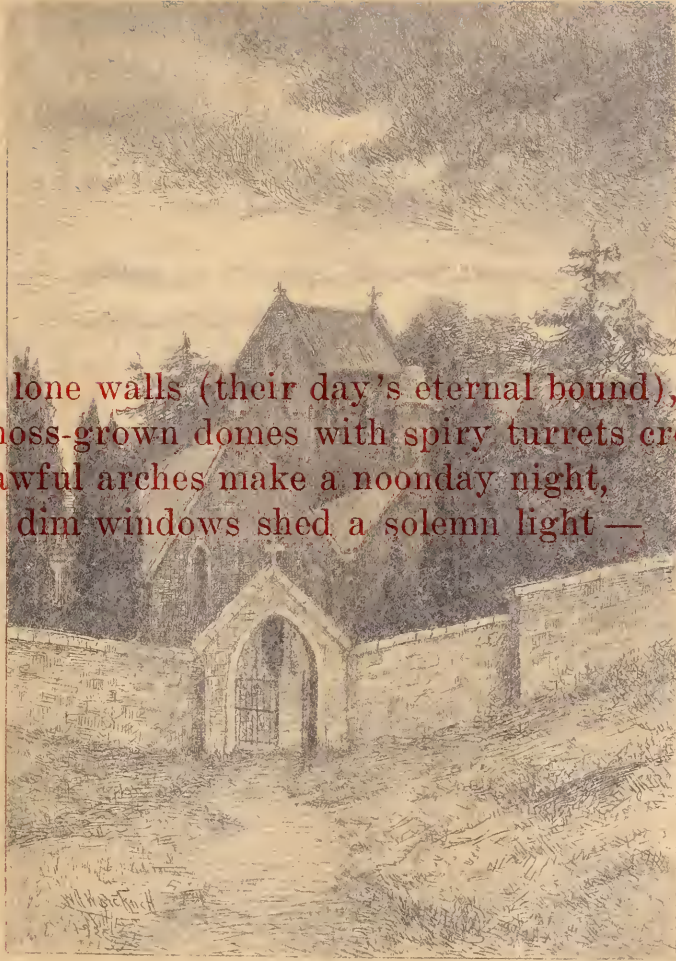
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
The wandering streams that shine between the hills,

The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze —  
No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Long-sounding aisles and intermingled graves,  
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dread repose.  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

Yet here for ever, ever must I stay;  
Sad proof how well a lover can obey!  
Death, only death can break the lasting chain;  
And here, ev'n then, shall my cold dust remain;  
Here all its frailties, all its flames resign,  
And wait till 'tis no sin to mix with thine.

In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound),  
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown'd,  
Where awful arches make a noonday night,  
And the dim windows shed a solemn light —



But why should I on others' prayers depend?  
Come thou, my father, brother, husband, friend!  
Ah, let thy handmaid, sister, daughter, move,  
And all those tender names in one, thy love!  
The darksome pines, that o'er yon rocks re-  
clined,

Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
The wandering streams that shine between the  
hills,

The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
The dying shades that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze —

No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
In these lone walls (their day's eternal bond),  
Or left to rest the visionary maid.  
These moss-grown domes with spire-turrets crown'd,  
But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Where willow arches make a noonday night,  
Long-sounding aisles and intermingled graves,  
And the dim windows shed a solemn light —  
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws

A death-like silence, and a dread repose.  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

Yet here for ever, ever must I stay;  
Sad proof how well a lover can obey!  
Death, only death can break the lasting chain;  
And here, even then, shall my cold dust remain;  
Here all its frailties, all its flames resign,  
And wait till 'tis no sin to mix with thine.









Ah wretch! believed the spouse of God in  
vain,  
Confessed within the slave of love and man.  
Assist me, Heav'n! but whence arose that  
prayer?  
Sprung it from piety or from despair?  
Ev'n here, where frozen chastity retires,  
Love finds an altar for forbidden fires.  
I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;  
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault;  
I view my crime, but kindle at the view,  
Repent old pleasures, and solicit new;  
Now turn'd to Heav'n, I weep my past offence,  
Now think of thee, and curse my innocence.  
Of all affliction taught a lover yet,  
'Tis sure the hardest science to forget!  
How shall I lose the sin, yet keep the sense,  
And love th' offender, yet detest th' offence?  
How the dear object from the crime remove,  
Or how distinguish Penitence from Love?  
Unequal task! a passion to resign,  
For hearts so touched, so pierced, so lost as  
mine:  
Ere such a soul regains its peaceful state,  
How often must it love, how often hate!  
How often hope, despair, resent, regret,  
Conceal, disdain — do all things but forget!  
But let Heav'n seize it, all at once 'tis fired;

Not touched, but rapt; not wakened, but inspired!

O come! O teach me Nature to subdue,  
Renounce my love, my life, myself — and you:  
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for He  
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;<sup>1</sup>  
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind,  
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned:  
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;  
Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;  
Desires composed, affections ever even;  
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to  
Heaven.

Grace shines around her with serenest beams,  
And whispering angels prompt her golden  
dreams.

For her the unfading rose of Eden blooms,  
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes;  
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring;  
For her white virgins hymeneals sing;  
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,  
And melts in visions of eternal day.

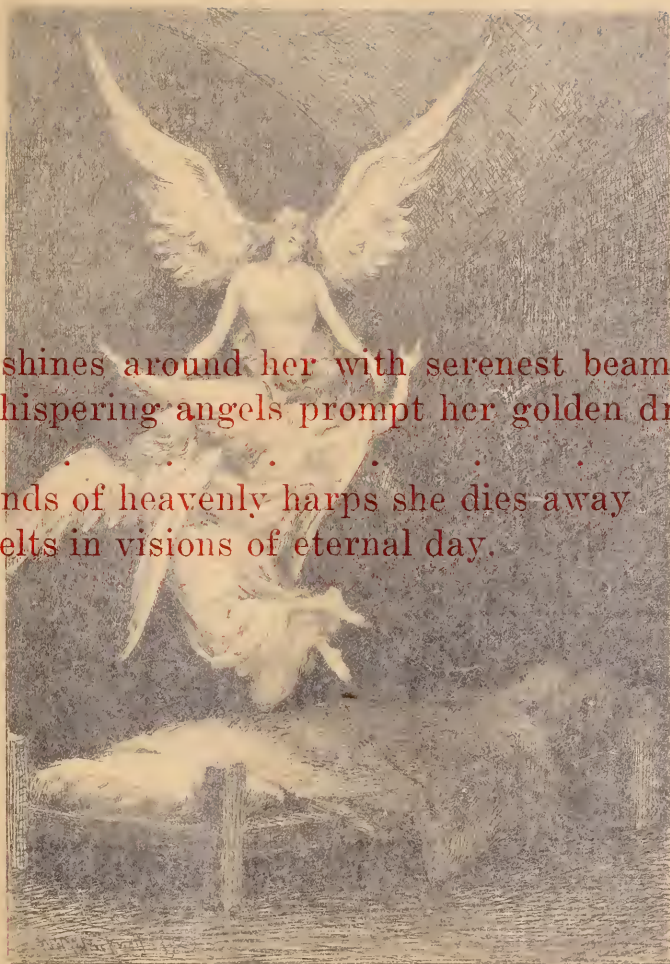
---

<sup>1</sup> Stevenson borrowed this line and used it in a little poem recently printed in the Bibliophile edition of his unpublished poems:

My wife and I, in one romantic cot,  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.

Grace shines around her with serenest beams,  
And whispering angels prompt her golden dreams.

• • • • •  
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away  
And melts in visions of eternal day.



Not touched, but rapt; not wakened, but inspired!

O come! O teach me Nature to subdue,  
Renounce my love, my life, myself — and you:  
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for He  
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee.

How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot;  
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind,  
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned:  
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;  
Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;  
Desires composed, affections ever even;  
Tears that delight, and sighs that wait to

Heaven.  
Grace shines around her with seraphic beams,  
And whispering angels prompt her golden dreams.

For her the unfading rose of Eden blooms,  
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes;  
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring;  
For her white virgins hymeneals sing;  
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,  
And melts in visions of eternal day.

<sup>1</sup> Stevenson borrowed this line and used it in a little poem recently printed in the Bibliophile edition of his unpublished poems:

My wife and I, in one romantic cot,  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.









Far other dreams my erring soul employ,  
Far other raptures of unholy joy.  
When at the close of each sad, sorrowing day,  
Fancy restores what vengeance snatched away,  
Then conscience sleeps, and leaving Nature free,  
All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee!  
Oh cursed, dear horrors of all-conscious might!  
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!  
Provoking demons all restraint remove,  
And stir within me every source of love.  
I hear thee, view thee, gaze o'er all thy charms,  
And round thy phantom glue my claspings arms.  
I wake:—no more I hear, no more I view,  
The phantom flies me, as unkind as you.  
I call aloud; it hears not what I say:  
I stretch my empty arms; it glides away!  
To dream once more I close my willing eyes;  
Ye soft illusions, dear deceits, arise,  
Alas, no more!—methinks we wandering go  
Thro' dreary wastes, and weep each other's  
    woe,  
Where round some mouldering tower pale ivy  
    creeps,  
And low-browed rocks hang nodding o'er the  
    deeps.  
Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies;  
Clouds interpose, waves roar, and winds arise.  
I shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,

And wake to all the griefs I left behind.

For thee the Fates, severely kind, ordain  
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;  
Thy life a long dead calm of fixed repose;  
No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows.<sup>1</sup>  
Still as the sea, ere winds were taught to blow,  
Or moving spirit bade the waters flow;  
Soft as the slumbers of a saint forgiven,  
And mild as opening gleams of promised  
Heaven.

Come, Abelard! for what hast thou to dread?  
The torch of Venus burns not for the dead.<sup>2</sup>  
Nature stands checked; religion disapproves;  
Ev'n thou art cold — yet Eloisa loves.  
Ah, hopeless, lasting flames, like those that burn  
To light the dead, and warm the unfruitful urn!

What scenes appear wher'er I turn my view!  
The dear ideas, where'er I fly, pursue;  
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise,  
Stain all my soul, and wanton in my eyes.

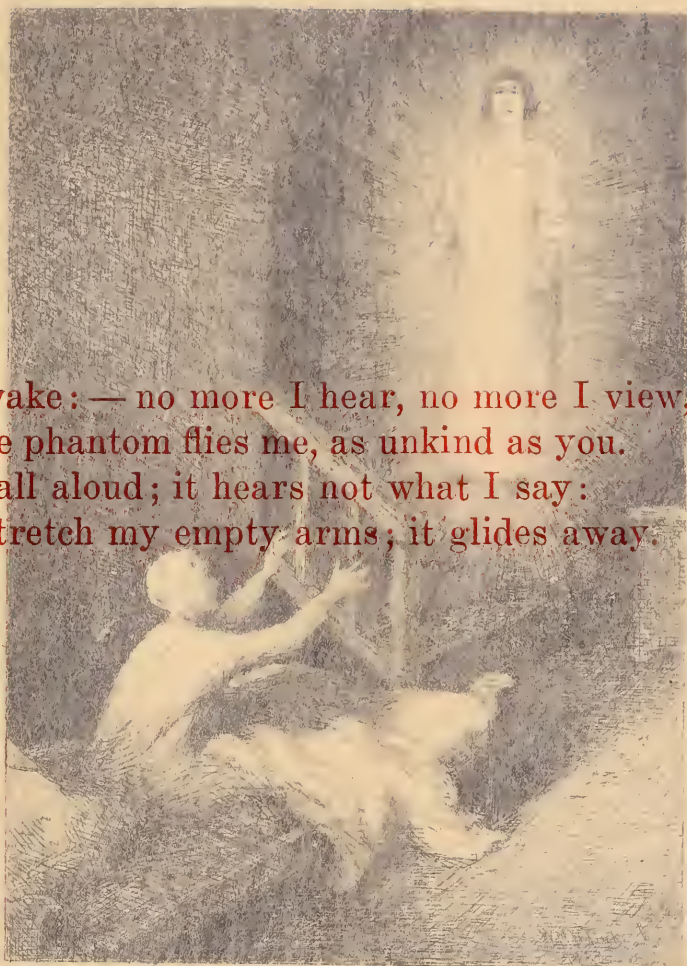
---

<sup>1</sup> Heloise to Abelard: "You are happy, Abelard, and your misfortunes have been the occasion of your finding rest. The punishment of your body has cured the deadly wounds of your soul. I am a thousand times more unfortunate than you; I must resist those fires which love kindles in a young heart."

<sup>2</sup> Heloise to Abelard: "When we love pleasures, we love the living and not the dead." In all editions of Pope's *Epistle*, till that of 1836, this couplet followed:

Cut from the root, my perished joys I see  
And love's warm tide for ever stopped in thee.

I wake: — no more I hear, no more I view,  
The phantom flies me, as unkind as you.  
I call aloud; it hears not what I say:  
I stretch my empty arms; it glides away.





And wake to all the griefs I left behind.

For thee the Fates, severely kind, ordain  
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;  
Thy life a long dead calm of fixed repose;  
No pulse that beats, and no blood that glows.<sup>1</sup>  
Still as the sea, ere winds were taught to blow,  
Or moving spirit bade the waters flow;  
Soft as the murmurs of a faint forgotten  
And milder as opening gleams of promised  
Heaven.

Come, Abelard! for what hast thou to dread?  
The torch of Venus burns not for the dead.<sup>2</sup>  
Nature's shocks checked, religion's dissonance  
Lies in thy art cold, yet Fleiss loves  
Ah, hopeless, lasting flames, like the torch that  
To light the dead, I stretch my empty arms; it glides away

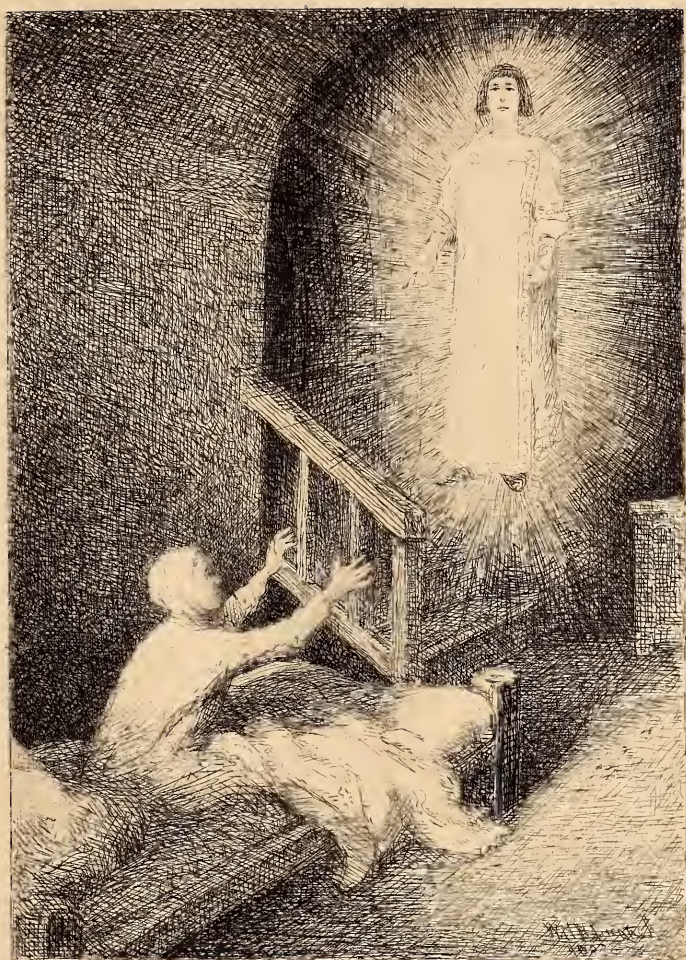
What scenes appear wher'er I turn my view!  
The dear ideas, where'er I fly, pursue;  
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise,  
Stain all thy soul, and wanton in my eyes.

<sup>1</sup> Heloise to Abelard: "You are happy, Abelard, and your misfortune have been the occasion of your finding rest. The punishment of your body has cured the deadly wounds of your soul. You are a thousand times more unfortunate than you; I must resist those fires which love kindles in a young heart."

<sup>2</sup> Heloise to Abelard: "When we love pleasures, we love the living and not the dead." In all editions of Pope's Epistle, till that of 1846, this couplet followed:

Cut from the root, my perished joys I see  
And love's warm tide for ever stopped in thee.







I waste the matin lamp in sighs for thee,  
Thy image steals between my God and me :  
Thy voice I seem in every hymn to hear,  
With every bead I drop too soft a tear.  
When from the censer clouds of fragrance roll,  
And swelling organs lift the rising soul,  
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight,  
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight :  
In seas of flame my plunging soul is drowned,  
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.

While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,  
Kind virtuous drops just gathering in my eye,  
While praying, trembling, in the dust I roll,  
And dawning grace is opening on my soul :  
Come, if thou darest, all charming as thou art !  
Oppose thyself to Heaven ; dispute my heart ;  
Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes  
Blot out each bright idea of the skies ;  
Take back that grace, those sorrows and those  
tears,

Take back my fruitless penitence and prayers ;  
Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode :  
Assist the fiends, and tear me from my God !  
No, fly me, fly me, far as pole from pole ;  
Rise Alps between us ! and whole oceans roll !  
Ah, come not, write not, think not once of me,  
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.  
Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign ;  
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.

Fair eyes, and tempting looks (which yet I  
view),

Long loved, adored ideas, all adieu!

O Grace serene, O Virtue heavenly fair!

Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care!

Fresh blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky!

And Faith, our early immortality!

Enter each mild, each amicable guest;

Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest!

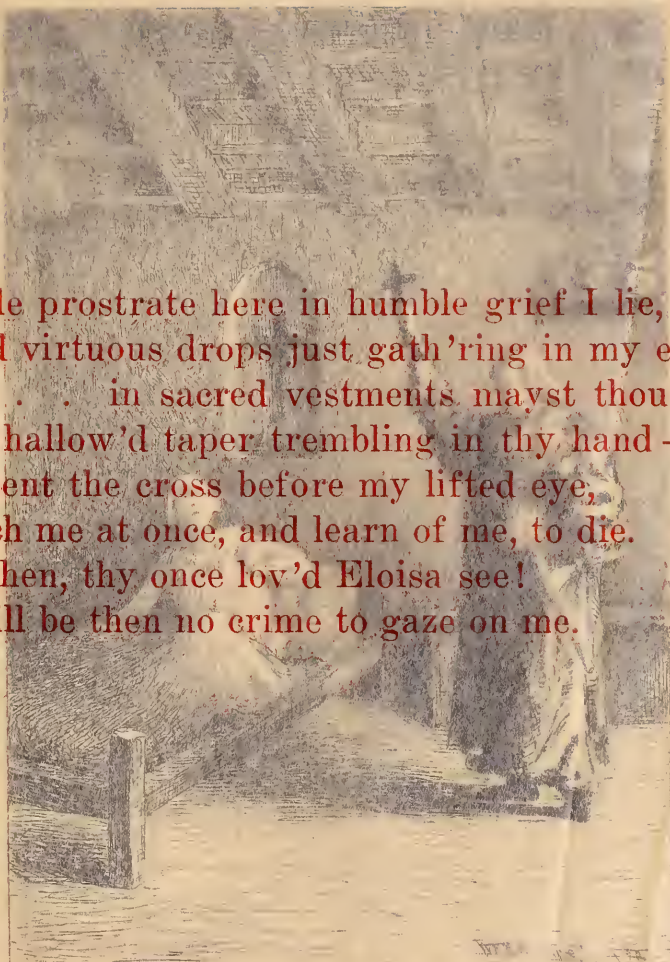
See in her cell sad Eloisa spread,  
Propped on some tomb, a neighbour of the dead.  
In each low wind methinks a spirit calls,  
And more than echoes talk along the walls.  
Here, as I watched the dying lamps around,  
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound:  
“Come, sister, come!” (It said, or seem’d to  
say)

“Thy place is here, sad sister, come away;  
Once, like thyself, I trembled, wept, and prayed,  
Love’s victim then tho’ now sainted maid:  
But all is calm in this eternal sleep;  
Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep;  
Ev’n superstition loses every fear:  
For God, not man, absolves our frailties here.”

I come, I come! prepare your roseate bowers,  
Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flowers.  
Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,  
Where flames refined in breasts seraphic glow;  
Thou, Abelard, the last sad office pay,



While prostrate here in humble grief I lie,  
Kind virtuous drops just gath'ring in my eye,  
. . . . . in sacred vestments mayst thou stand,  
The hallow'd taper trembling in thy hand —  
Present the cross before my lifted eye,  
Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die.  
Ah then, thy once lov'd Eloisa see!  
It will be then no crime to gaze on me.





Fair eyes, and tempting looks (which yet I  
view),

Long loved, adored ideas, all adieu!

O Grace serene, O Virtue heavenly fair!

Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care!

Fresh blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky!

And Faith, our early immortality!

Enter each mild, each amicable guest:

Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest!

See in her cell sad Eloisa spread,

Propped on a cushion, and in humble grief I lie,

In each low wind my sighs, and in my eye,

Kind virtuous drops just gath'ring in my eye,

And when they fall, my sighs, and in my eye,

Here, as I watched the dying lamp, I saw

From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound:

"Come, sister, come!" (It said, or seem'd to

say) Ah then, thy once lov'd Eloisa see!

"Thy place is here, sad sister, come away;

Once, like thyself, I trembled, wept, and prayed,

Love's victim then tho' now sainted maid:

But all is calm in this eternal sleep;

Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep;

Ev'n superstition loses every fear:

For God, not man, absolves our frailties here."

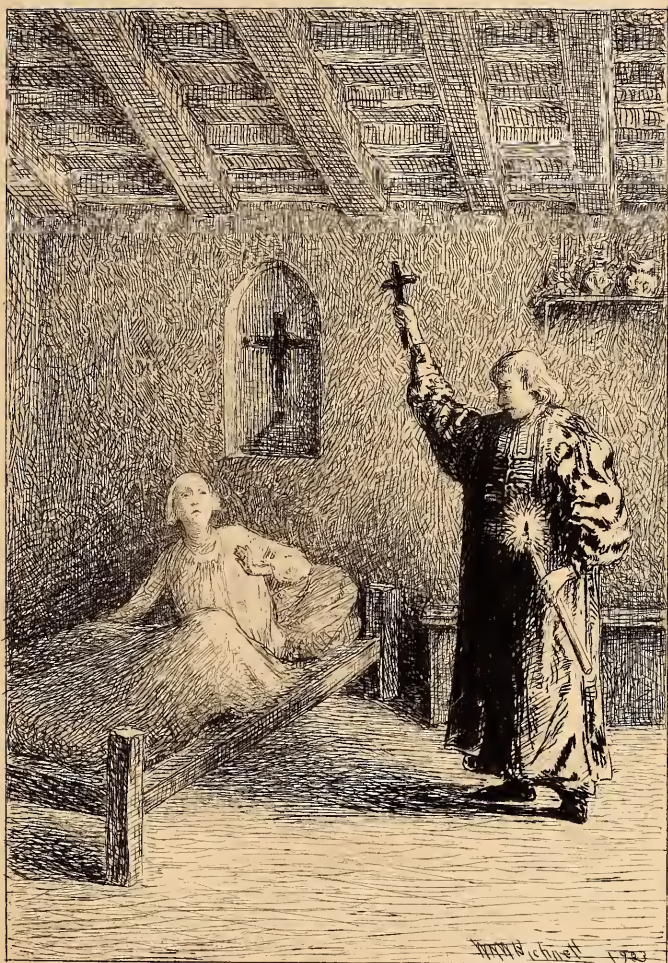
I come, I come! prepare your roseate bowers,

Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flowers.

Thither, where sinners may have rest, I go,

Where flames refined in breasts seraphic glow;

Thou, Abelard, the last sad office pay,





And smooth my passage to the realms of day:  
See my lips tremble, and my eyeballs roll,  
Suck my last breath, and catch my flying soul!  
Ah, no — in sacred vestments mayst thou stand,  
The hallowed taper trembling in thy hand,  
Present the cross before my lifted eye,  
Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die.  
Ah then, thy once loved Eloisa see!  
It will be then no crime to gaze on me.  
See from my cheek the transient roses fly!  
See the last sparkle languish in my eye!  
Till every motion, pulse, and breath be o'er,  
And ev'n my Abelard be loved no more.  
O Death, all-eloquent! you only prove  
What dust we doat on, when 'tis man we love.

Then too, when Fate shall thy fair form  
destroy  
(That cause of all my guilt, and all my joy),  
In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drowned,  
Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee  
round;  
From opening skies may streaming glories  
shine,  
And saints embrace thee with a love like mine!  
May one kind grave unite each hapless name,  
And graft my love immortal on thy fame!  
Then, ages hence, when all my woes are o'er,  
When this rebellious heart shall beat no more,  
If ever chance two wandering lovers brings



To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,  
O'er the pale marble shall they join their heads,  
And drink the falling tears each other sheds;  
Then sadly say, with mutual pity moved,  
"O may we never love as these have loved!"  
From the full choir, when loud hosannas rise  
And swell the pomp of dreadful sacrifice,  
Amid that scene if some relenting eye  
Glance on the stone where our cold relics lie,  
Devotion's self shall steal a thought from  
Heaven,

One human tear shall drop, and be forgiven.

And sure if fate some future bard shall join  
In sad similitude of griefs to mine,  
Condemned whole years in absence to deplore,  
And image charms he must behold no more, —  
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well,  
Let him our sad, our tender story tell;  
The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive  
ghost;  
He best can paint them who shall feel them  
most.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Lady Mary Montagu, Pope calls attention to the sentiment here expressed in the last eight lines, in which the poet departs from the text of Heloise's letters, and sadly laments his hopeless and unrequited love for that estimable lady. It will therefore be seen that his "well-sung woes" of Heloise proceeded from a chastened and peculiarly sympathetic heart. — ED.





















the  
university of  
connecticut  
libraries



